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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 16 June 1992, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Miss SETH (India)

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General debate (continued)

Statement by the Secretary-General

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mrs. KABA CAMARA (Observer for Côte d'Ivoire), referring to the Executive Director's recommendation concerning the country programme of Côte d'Ivoire (E/ICEF/1992/P/L.9, said that, despite the Government's efforts, the quality of life for women and children in her country had deteriorated. Although there was a basic health and education infrastructure, since 1980 the effects of external debt and falling commodity prices had obliged the Government to adopt structural adjustment measures, and the consequent drastic cuts in public spending had caused severe social hardship. The rural population, which accounted for 61 per cent of the total population, had been the hardest hit.

2. In Côte d'Ivoire, one family out of every 10, on average, was headed by a woman; as elsewhere in Africa, women lacked education and had low-paying jobs. The illiteracy rate for women was estimated at 86.3 per cent in rural areas and 71.9 per cent in urban areas; in Abidjan, it was 56.7 per cent. The infant mortality rate had fallen considerably since 1965, but remained quite high (110 per thousand in 1989). The maternal mortality rate was a disturbing 840 per 100,000 live births. The leading causes of death among infants included neonatal infections, malnutrition, diarrhoeal disease, malaria and respiratory infections. The authorities, having achieved an average vaccination coverage of 60 per cent, were no longer able to purchase the vaccine required to continue the immmunization policy.

3. The authorities were also concerned about the situation of children living in especially difficult circumstances. With the assistance of NGOs, training schemes had been established, but the effort required further support, particularly in view of the increase in street children and school dropouts due to the spread of family poverty and the lack of State financial resources. No progress was being made in the areas of education, water supplies, hygiene and social security and access to information on mother and child health care was limited.

4. One encouraging sign, however, was the growing political will, at government and local levels, to face the challenge in order to break out of the vicious circle of poverty. The country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Head of State had signed the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children; and the Government had concluded with UNICEF an agreement on a programme of cooperation to benefit women and children, setting forth guidelines and objectives for the year 2000.

5. The programme which was before the Board aimed first and foremost at removing regional disparities by benefiting the six most deprived regions and correcting disparities between girls and boys. The Bamako Initiative was, inter alia, part of the programme. The Government had expressed its readiness to promote education, health and target planning based on improved data

(Mrs. Kaba Camara,
Observer, Côte d'Ivoire)

collection and analysis, as well as improved institutional capacity and a closer partnership between State, population and donor community. The overall population policy was to control demographic growth; the task would require financial aid from the international community.

6. The forthcoming Donors' Conference on Assistance to African Children would be an opportunity to measure the degree of the commitments adopted at the World Summit for Children. Despite the constant reiteration that Africa had priority, there was nothing, in current financial and manpower allocations, to support that assertion. Children the world over needed equal attention, but it would be unjust to divert funds from South to North and to reduce contributions to Africa in order to attend to the needs of the new European democracies; the latter should be helped by means of additional resources.

7. Mr. CASSON (Australia) said that the first prerequisite for attaining the goals of the World Summit for Children and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was community participation. In many instances, unfortunately, the concept of actively involving recipients in programme design and implementation was not well applied in practice.

8. Australia welcomed the emphasis on community participation in Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as well as in recent UNICEF publications on children and the environment. The Bamako Initiative was an example of UNICEF's pro-active role in community involvement, and UNICEF's forthcoming report on programming for sustainable development presented an ideal opportunity for UNICEF to examine further strategies in that regard.

9. UNICEF could be proud of its achievement in alleviating the suffering of millions of children through the universal child immunization initiative. The goal of UCI having been reached in many countries, greater resources could henceforth be applied to other important child health problems. His delegation welcomed the papers on AIDS, women in development and acute respiratory infections (ARI); it particularly welcomed the ARI paper, noting the recognition of the links between environmental risk factors and ARI, and looked forward to details, in future reports, of UNICEF's efforts to make the environment less conducive to ARI. The AIDS pandemic was worsening, and the issue was gaining more attention in development forums. Australia noted the link between UNICEF's programmes and those of other agencies, and it endorsed UNICEF's proposal to intensify its AIDS prevention activities, but would like the secretariat to provide more details of the costs envisaged. It endorsed Denmark's call for further coordination at Headquarters and in the field.

10. His delegation welcomed the Executive Director's acknowledgement of the need to strengthen basic health infrastructures and services in order to promote access for the poorest, and agreed that capacity-building should underpin all programme initiatives; the relevant paper submitted by UNICEF usefully summarized the issues in that complex field. He hoped that UNICEF

(Mr. Casson, Australia)

would apply the concepts described therein to innovative strategies relating to ARI, women in development, HIV/AIDS and other UNICEF activities, and would welcome a report evaluating the extent and effectiveness of UNICEF's capacity-building initiatives.

11. One of the important issues before the current session was UNICEF's role in education. His delegation was particularly concerned that any effort by UNICEF to retain and possibly increase the share of expenditure on education should be accompanied by a careful delineation of goals to ensure complementarity with wider UNICEF objectives. A second issue was that of improving the transparency and accountability of UNICEF. The reports of the Budget Format Reference Group were a welcome start to making budget information more "user-friendly"; the proposal to reduce the existing 17 global funds to 4 was a satisfactory example. A third issue centred on evaluation, which was not only an important assessment tool but an aid to an organization's transparency and accountability - a matter of interest to the Australian Parliament when deliberating the allocation of funds. While noting the improved evaluation in recent years, his delegation felt that further steps should include improved capacity for field officers to monitor their programmes.

12. Mr. RISTIMÄKI (Finland) said that the approach adopted in the medium-term plan for 1992-1995 deserved support. His delegation endorsed the emphasis placed on the country programming process, the programme approach and national execution. The United Nations also had wide responsibility in the area of disaster relief, coordination of which activities had been strengthened by the recent establishment of the Department for Humanitarian Affairs. His delegation expected that UNICEF's emergency activities would in due course become an integral part of the new arrangement, and reiterated its view that UNICEF's involvement in emergency assistance should concentrate on tasks within its specific mandate.

13. His delegation was satisfied with the budget reform process initiated since the previous regular session, and hoped that reforms would continue. While Finland remained a major donor to UNICEF, with a contribution amounting to some US$ 30 million in 1992, it was unlikely that it would be able to maintain its contribution at the current level during the next few years. He therefore stressed the need for realism when making income projections.

14. It was important that United Nations operational activities for development should focus on common goals and strategies, with system-wide governance. One objective of the Nordic United Nations project was to increase the responsiveness of United Nations funds and programmes to governing body decisions. At the policy-making level, his delegation recognized the need to assign to a single intergovernmental body the task of debating broad development issues and providing coherent policy guidance; at the operational level, benefits could accrue from establishing separate small executive bodies for each programme and fund, to provide close links between the member States and the executive management. Such reforms would be

(Mr. Ristimäki, Finland)

considered at the forthcoming session of the Economic and Social Council. The ideas presented by the Executive Director were a valuable contribution in that regard.

15. Increased popular participation and people power were among the prerequisites for long-term sustainable development; UNICEF and other United Nations bodies should strive to foster the trend to democratic development which existed in many countries. His delegation strongly endorsed UNICEF's policy of giving priority assistance to the least developed countries, most of which were in Africa, and had endorsed UNICEF's support to southern African women and children; it supported UNICEF's increased preparedness to help improve the situation of the majority in South Africa, and of poor women and children in particular. In Africa and elsewhere, UNICEF should concentrate on country programmes, for which recipient Governments bore the main responsibility. In that regard, Finland had doubts about the planned Donors' Conference on Assistance to the African Child, since it failed to see the need to discuss broad policy issues so soon after the World Summit for Children, and thought it unlikely that such a conference would help to mobilize additional external resources.

16. The situation in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States posed a challenge for UNICEF's advocacy role as well as its emergency and development activities. His delegation supported the Executive Director's recommendations contained in document E/ICEF/1992/L.14. Finland supported those countries bilaterally out of funds separate from development assistance; they should mobilize internal resources and make the best use of existing structures.

17. His delegation urged UNICEF to participate actively, in cooperation with UNFPA and other United Nations agencies, in preparations for the World Conference on Population and Development. UNICEF should further elaborate its population and family planning policies and make family planning an integral component of UNICEF-supported mother and child health and health education activities.

18. Mr. BOWEN (Barbados) said that one of the great challenges of the coming decade would be how to implement the goals of the Declaration adopted at the World Summit for Children. While the Latin American and Caribbean Governments were keen to implement the Summit goals, they were beset by an external debt of some US$ 428 billion in 1990, hyperinflation, chronic unemployment and abject poverty, and the prospect of achieving those goals therefore seemed bleak. His delegation therefore welcomed the recommendations, in document E/ICEF/1992/L.15, arising out of the mid-term evaluation of the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC), and hoped that it would receive adequate financial support.

19. His delegation, while welcoming UNICEF's moves to intensify its advocacy for women, felt that more resources were needed for programmes to promote women's economic independence. In that context, it welcomed the Executive

(Mr. Bowen, Barbados)

Director's recommendation that the Board should approve the amount of US$ 5.1 million from general resources and US$ 5 million from supplementary funds for the multi-island programme of the eastern Caribbean for 1993-1997; that programme had been of great benefit and was strongly supported by the region's Governments.

20. UNICEF could not ignore the plight of children in Central and Eastern Europe and in the newly independent States; however, his delegation was pleased by the Executive Director's assurance that assistance to those States would not be at the expense of the children of Africa and other developing countries.

21. In keeping with the principle of "first call for children", Barbados had consistently allocated the highest portion of its national budget to the provision of education and primary health care for children. Its plan of action was near completion and would be integrated into the national development plan for the period 1993-1998. The achievement of the goals for children would become a major development objective. In November 1991, Barbados had hosted the first Caribbean Summit for Children which had brought together 34 children from 14 different Caribbean countries. The summit recommendations would be considered by the 13th meeting of heads of Government of the Caribbean Community in June 1992.

22. The 1990s would present a rigorous challenge to translate the goals of the World Conference on Education for All and the World Summit for Children into reality. His delegation urged UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNDP and UNHCR to concert their efforts as that strategy offered the greatest hope for achieving the major goals for children by the year 2000.

23. Mr. GARDEZI (Pakistan) said that there was no cause which merited higher priority than the protection and development of children, on whom the survival, stability and progress of nations and, indeed, of human civilization, depended. The international community must evolve a holistic approach to development, particularly in the developing world. Basic human needs, and the cluster of goals for children, could not be separated; developmental experience had shown repeatedly that lack of progress in one goal inevitably hampered the fulfilment of other goals.

24. Pakistan had signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child within a year of its adoption. It had finalized its national programme of action, which reflected the importance it attached to an even greater investment in future generations in its development priorities. The Prime Minister had set up a high-level task force to work out a plan of action for the well-being of children. The Government had also embarked on a three-year social action programme to expand immunization coverage, accelerate programmes for the control of diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections, and train community health workers; an allocation had been provided which was over and above the normal health budget for the year 1992-1993.

(Mr. Gardezi, Pakistan)

25. Many new initiatives had been undertaken. Remarkable results had been achieved through the accelerated health and diarrhoeal disease control programmes; more than 86 per cent of children under 2 years of age and 76 per cent of those under 1 year had been fully immunized, and ORS was now available to 73 per cent of families. Training had been provided for 35,000 traditional birth attendants.

26. In 1991, Pakistan had been one of the 12 developing countries selected to lead the baby-friendly hospital initiative. Meetings had been held in Pakistan with infant formula distributors, and they agreed to stop free and low-cost supplies to all the baby-friendly hospitals by February 1992, and to all health facilities by June 1992, and to monitor compliance with that agreement. The initiative was being gradually expanded to include hospitals in all provinces in Pakistan.

27. Pakistan was working on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; compilation and annotation of Pakistani laws about children had been completed, which would facilitate the enactment of the necessary legislation about children. The Employment of Children Act of 1991 had been passed to prohibit the employment of children in certain occupations and regulate the conditions of work of children. Pakistan had participated in the South Asia consultations on the rights of the child and would be submitting its first implementation report to the committee on the rights of the child in December 1992.

28. His Government would not be able to achieve its ambitious goals without assistance and guidance from the world community; it would also be happy to share the lessons it had learned. In view of the high density of population and preponderance of women and children in South Asia, adequate funds must be allocated to the region and donor support must be provided to country programmes, the success of which would help bilateral and regional efforts.

29. His delegation supported the report of the Executive Director and was pleased that the largest sectors in the UNICEF programme remained the same.

30. Mrs. LUGEMBE (United Republic of Tanzania) said that Tanzania's new country programme for 1992 to 1996 had been designed with a view to implementing a community-based development strategy, focusing on building and strengthening organizational and management capabilities at the community and other levels. That strategy was likely to produce tangible results and sustainable development because the necessary organizational and operational infrastructure existed. However, persisting economic hardships, in particular the debt burden and the impact of structural adjustment programmes, had resulted in poor delivery of social services; there were acute shortages in schools and in the health sector and the associated infrastructure was not being maintained. Cultural attitudes that were heavily biased against women significantly compounded the problem; women, particularly in rural areas, continued to shoulder the bulk of the workload and to have very little access to credit and production facilities.

(Mrs. Lugembe, United Republic of Tanzania)

31. Her delegation welcomed the 10 propositions outlined in the State of the World's Children 1992. Her delegation joined others in urging UNICEF to maintain the emphasis on field orientation so as to ensure effective programme implementation. UNICEF's efforts in advocacy were commendable, particularly in raising awareness regarding the negative social impact of structural adjustment programmes; UNICEF, in cooperation with other agencies, should vigorously pursue other modalities for alleviating the problems of children, keeping in focus the continued need to reach the most disadvantaged groups.

32. Tanzania's National Coordination Committee had produced two drafts of the National Programme of Action, one for the mainland and one for Zanzibar, which would eventually be merged. A number of problems had been encountered. Since the strategy was community-based, a realistic national programme of action should involve the communities in its preparation, implementation and monitoring; therefore, the existing drafts were only a framework. However, in-depth studies were still needed in order to determine levels of financing realistically. A series of seminars and workshops would be held at the national, regional and district levels in order to obtain field experience and inputs from communities.

33. Her delegation was concerned that the resources allocated to the African continent, particularly from supplementary funding, were declining, and urged UNICEF to mobilize more funds from general resources, since that was the most reliable source of funding. UNICEF was providing commendable assistance in preparations for the Donors' Conference on Assistance to African Children, which should provide an opportunity for the international donor community to engage in dialogue with African countries and mobilize the additional resources that were required.

34. Her delegation regarded the Bamako Initiative as the most viable way of providing sustainable primary health care and urged UNICEF to continue its efforts and advocacy for the programme.

35. It was gratifying that UNICEF, unlike many agencies, worked closely with member Governments in articulating social policy issues, identifying problems and implementing programmes to redress those problems.

36. Mr. OSATANANDA (Thailand) said that UNICEF should continue its decentralized and flexible management structure to allow more effective delivery of services at the grass-roots level thereby ensuring optimum use of limited resources in serving the children of the world.

37. Thailand had achieved considerable progress in making breast-feeding education and practice an integral part of hospitals, and the Ten Steps had become policy for all hospitals. A national programme to promote breast-feeding had been launched, and legislation had been issued to extend maternity leave so as to enable mothers to breast-feed. Work was continuing on strengthening maternal education and designing a national education

(Mr. Osatananda, Thailand)

programme, with the participation of a number of non-governmental organizations.

38. On the subject of advocacy and social mobilization, his delegation shared the view that programme delivery and policy advocacy were complementary, and urged UNICEF to continue its efforts to influence policy makers and encourage action taken by families, communities, government and non-governmental organizations.

39. His delegation hoped that UNICEF would continue its work of integrating the issues and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into the country programmes of member States. Thailand had already acceded to the Convention. A national committee had been appointed to draft a national programme of action which would be used as national guidelines on child development.

40. It was gratifying that UNICEF was becoming more responsive to the many strategic and practical issues concerning women, since in many countries, the low status of women remained a major obstacle to their survival and advancement. His Government was pursuing policies for the betterment of women. A first National Assembly on Women and Development had been held in March 1992 and had produced a National Declaration on Women and Development and a long-term perspective plan on women. His delegation supported UNICEF's strategy of concentrating its assistance to developing countries on promoting the status of women through advocacy, policy-oriented research and technical cooperation, in collaboration with other development partners and other bilateral donors including NGOs.

41. Since the World Conference on Education for All, his Government had committed itself to strengthening and extending basic education through formal and non-formal systems, involving both public and private sectors, and had taken steps to ensure that children from marginalized families were given an equal opportunity to enrol for classes. Efforts were being made to encourage children to stay in school and to continue to the secondary school level. Attention was also being given to early childhood education. Kindergartens were increasingly available in rural areas; the curriculum was being made more responsive to the needs of different regions of the country; basic skills training was being provided to rural youth; and awareness of environmental problems was being encouraged.

42. Mr. ARRIA (Observer for Venezuela) said that his country had organized a national conference on the rights of the child to raise awareness of children's rights and to discuss targets, strategies and resources to achieve the goals for children for the year 2000. With UNICEF cooperation, programmes to reduce maternal and child deaths, malnutrition and low birth weight had been strengthened.

43. Many countries in Latin America were pursuing rigorous structural adjustment policies, without regard to social conditions. More and more

(Mr. Arria, Observer, Venezuela)

families were living in absolute poverty, and even the middle class had seen its standard of living decline. UNICEF could make an important contribution by reopening the discussion of "adjustment with a human face" and by advocating global economic policies integrating the social dimension.

44. Social management was strategic to social policy implementation, but there was a shortage of trained personnel. UNICEF should cooperate more closely with pilot management training programmes begun by UNDP and other regional organizations in order to ensure adequate human resources for the success of its programmes.

45. The plight of women and children living in poverty had gone almost unnoticed at the recently concluded Earth Summit. Everyone had spoken of preserving the planet for their children and their children's children, but many of the world's children would not survive to inherit that legacy, because children's issues were not given due priority by the international community.

46. His delegation supported the Executive Director's proposals for the establishment of a new world order for children. "First call for children" should be its guiding principles. The population issue, therefore, must be carefully examined, since it was closely associated with education and poverty. Children were the main concern of his Government's policies. Half the state budget was allocated to health and education programmes and other social expenditures with children as their main target. Such an approach was only natural, since children worldwide were absorbing the impact of society's failures.

47. Mr. ALI (Observer for Iraq) said that his country had always endeavoured by careful planning to ensure a better and happier life for Iraqi children. Inter alia, free medical care was given to mothers before and after childbirth, immunization was free for children, and crèches and kindergartens were made available for them. Under the Iraqi Constitution, primary education was compulsory for all children, and education at all levels was free. The intention was that children should grow up capable of creating a better society, with a view to a better future for the country and its civilization. All kinds of medical care were provided free of charge to all citizens. For the wellbeing of mother, child and family, every mother was given one year's compulsory paid leave following confinement.

48. For many years UNICEF had played a major role in supporting Iraq's efforts to improve the situation of children in Iraq, sometimes by advisory services and sometimes by material and moral assistance. However, all those efforts had largely collapsed during and after the Gulf War. He did not wish to inject political issues into the general debate, but it was essential to mention some of the facts that had caused the child health situation in Iraq to deteriorate tragically. The total destruction of electricity grids in Iraq had caused the spoilage of all vaccines in the country, while the destruction of water-treatment stations had destroyed the whole system, causing total water pollution. That had affected child health and led to a widespread

(Mr. Ali, Observer, Iraq)

outbreak of diarrhoea, typhoid and cholera among children. Even the children's milk plant, the only one in Iraq, had been totally destroyed, on the pretext that it served the Iraqi war effort.

49. His delegation had no doubt that no one desired the death of the children of Iraq. However, regrettably, what was happening now in Iraq, through the insistence of certain States on strengthening the stranglehold on the children of Iraq, was the premeditated murder of those very children. The statistics and studies prepared by UNICEF through its teams that had recently visited Iraq corroborated those facts. The latest statistics showed that, between August 1990 and March 1992, 39,114 Iraqi children under the age of 5 had died, while 119,305 citizens in the over-5 age group had died. The statistics prepared by a medical group that had visited Iraq before the above-mentioned period showed that more than 900,000 Iraqi children were suffering from severe malnutrition. A United States medical team which had visited Iraq in October 1991 had stated in its report that child mortality in Iraq had increased fourfold over the figure for the period prior to the imposition of sanctions.

50. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had stated on the previous day, sanctions were "a double-edged sword". In the case of Iraq, it was children and women who were hurt most.

51. His delegation felt obliged to commend the material and moral assistance currently provided by UNICEF through its office in Iraq or through visits made by teams from time to time, in particular the visit of the Deputy Executive-Director. However, in spite of the volume of assistance provided by UNICEF and other humanitarian organizations, it was insufficient to meet fully the needs of children in Iraq and constituted only 5 to 10 per cent of the children's requirements that had been met by the Iraqi Government before the imposition of economic sanctions on Iraq. His delegation hoped that a separate report on the situation of children in Iraq would be prepared during the current session.

52. Mrs. BENNANI (Observer for Morocco) said that the commitments undertaken by the international community under the International Convention on the Rights of the Child had already been reflected in greater cooperation between the various agencies and organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. The role of the latter had been decisive, both in ensuring the adoption of the Convention and in preparing the programmes resulting from the World Summit. Her delegation was happy to support the 10 propositions contained in the State of the World's Children 1992, which provided guidelines for the implementation of the Convention and the decisions taken at the Summit. In particular, it welcomed the new recognition that alleviating the absolute poverty of one quarter of mankind should have the same priority in the new world order as peace-keeping and environmental protection.

(Mrs. Bennani, Observer, Morocco)

53. The demographic explosion of the last three decades and the major upheavals that had taken place in the world had undoubtedly helped to bring about an unjust economic situation in which children were the prime victims. Many children in the third world, and especially in Africa, lived in unstable societies characterized by the disintegration of loosely structured families afflicted by chronic poverty. New forms of child suffering and abuse were emerging, and were likely to increase as certain countries lapsed into anarchy, in addition to the ravages caused by AIDS and by the famine resulting from drought and armed conflict. It was to be hoped that additional resources would be made available to UNICEF in order to enable it to shoulder its heavy burden in the years to come.

54. Since 1957, the Agreement between Morocco and UNICEF had paved the way for extremely fruitful cooperation in a number of areas such as maternal and children's health, nutrition, education, water supply and hygiene. Health services for mothers and children had been improved, and the birth rate had declined from 6.9 in 1980 to 4.5 in 1991 - as had the infant mortality rate, from 122 per 1,000 in 1975 to 73 per 1,000 in 1991. However, despite those significant achievements, infant, child and maternal mortality remained high.

55. Unprecedented progress had been made over the previous five years in respect of vaccination. With UNICEF's cooperation, Morocco's national vaccination programme had achieved the target of 80 per cent coverage of all children. That spectacular success had had a positive impact on the countries of the Maghreb Arab Union.

56. The 1992-1996 cooperation cycle between her Government and UNICEF had been carefully prepared in accordance with national objectives and with those contained in the Declaration of the World Summit for Children. The UNICEF office in Morocco had played a catalytic role in facilitating the preparation of an innovative and wide-ranging programme. In addition, information campaigns had been launched throughout Morocco to explain the provisions of the Declaration to all the national agencies involved in the welfare of children.

57. The Government had also adopted a major national plan of action, which contained, inter alia, a priority programme for children in especially difficult circumstances in the urban fringes, in addition to a programme for the education of young girls. With the latter priority in mind, non-governmental organizations of the Maghreb Arab Union had been organizing symposia and seminars on the health and education of girls.

58. Her Government was also engaged in preparing an economic and social development plan for the period 1993-1997, the major outlines of which would be in line with the aims and objectives of the World Summit.

59. In connection with external debt, her country had agreed that part of that debt should be swapped for drinking-water projects in rural areas.

(Mrs. Bennani, Observer, Morocco)

Furthermore, loans currently under negotiation with the World Bank would benefit education, health, public housing, employment and the environment.

60. Her delegation noted with consternation that, as a result of the Gulf war, a large number of children in that region were living in particularly difficult conditions, as were many children in Lebanon, Sudan and the occupied Palestinian territories.

61. UNICEF teams had efficiently carried out a considerable number of emergency operations. Although those operations had caused expenditure to rise from $49 million in 1990 to $111 million in 1991, it was noteworthy that UNICEF had been able to fulfil its increased obligations without detriment to its existing programmes.

62. Mr. YAHYA (Indonesia) said that the current world situation favoured the advancement of the goals of child survival, protection and development and the fulfilment of commitments entered into at the World Summit for Children.

63. The vast changes in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States undoubtedly required an appropriate response. The developing countries, however, wished to ensure that that response did not entail a diversion of resources away from them, and from Africa in particular. National conflicts and regional tensions continued to exact a high toll in human life and to divert financial and material resources from productive activities. In addition, economic hardship and natural disasters had led to a substantial increase in expenditure for emergencies. His delegation would welcome more information on the analysis of the workload relating to implementation of supplementary-funded programmes in order to justify the Executive Director's recommendation.

64. His delegation supported the recommendation by the Executive Director to reorganize and consolidate all UNICEF global funds, currently numbering 17, into four principal funds, as outlined in document E/ICEF/1992/L.10. Follow-up to the World Summit for Children and progress towards the goals for children and women by the year 2000 was encouraging as well. Every country should be encouraged to implement child survival and development programmes on the basis of self-reliance. Great progress had been made in the world-wide acceptance and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but the sense of urgency must be maintained so that commitments might be translated into action.

65. With regard to the medium-term plan (E/ICEF/1992/3), it appeared that a major challenge facing UNICEF was how to help countries secure access to knowledge, technology and health care, which implied the strengthening, revitalization or establishment of primary health care structures and systems. Community participation was essential if lasting results were to be achieved. His delegation welcomed the attention given to such critical issues as family planning and birth spacing.

(Mr. Yahya, Indonesia)

66. Indonesia's current five-year plan addressed a number of goals set forth at the World Summit: an increase in national immunization coverage of children under one year from 80 per cent to 90 per cent by 1996; reduction by half of severe and moderate malnutrition among children under five; promotion of breast-feeding through "baby-friendly" hospitals; halving of the maternal mortality; and universal access to basic education, with special attention to primary education and reduction of current disparities between boys and girls. His Government supported the idea of convening a world summit for social development.

67. Mr. SALMERON (Nicaragua) said that his Government fully supported UNICEF targets for the 1990s, in particular, a reduction in child mortality by one-third and in child malnutrition by half, and a reduction in deaths from measles by 95 per cent and from diarrhoea by 50 per cent. Building on the achievements of the last decade, those targets would save the lives of 3 million children each year. Furthermore, UNICEF efforts to improve inter-agency coordination had been highly effective, and could serve as a model for other agencies.

68. Development with a human face required major efforts to alleviate poverty and to promote awareness of the negative impact of structural adjustment programmes. Therefore, his Government supported increasing the resources of the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean. UNICEF had long been working to find a solution to the external debt problem, and he hoped that the "debt relief for children" proposals would soon become reality. The global disarmament process must be intensified as well, so that those resources could be channelled into programmes for children and for the most vulnerable groups of society.

6 . The Government of Nicaragua was committed to a social policy designed to protect the most vulnerable sectors of the population, alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life and the quality and efficiency of basic services - education, rural employment, primary health care, sanitation and nutrition - within a context of total respect for human rights. Economic support from the international community was required, however, to supplement its own efforts.

70. Strengthening of the national health system was vital to the efforts to address the problems of children. Like most Latin American countries, Nicaragua had high rates of maternal and child mortality and infectious disease and a growing rate of chronic degenerative diseases, compounded by disabilities caused by the war and the need to provide services and assistance to returnees and demobilized soldiers. To address those problems, the national health system should be strengthened through a system of local primary health care centres, a strategy which would develop and consolidate capabilities at the community level and ensure that the limited resources available were utilized in the most efficient and equitable manner. The Government had established a National Commission for the Protection of Children, which had recently submitted a five-year plan of action for Nicaraguan children to UNICEF. Its main objective was to reverse the factors

(Mr. Salmeron, Nicaragua)

hindering child development, by strengthening education, health and communications policy, and by promoting greater community participation in social programmes for children, youth and women.

71. His delegation supported UNICEF efforts to promote the role of women in development and its continued support to the formulation of national policies giving greater attention to children and women, as well as family planning and population policy. It welcomed the joint report of the Executive Directors of UNICEF and UNFPA (E/ICEF/1992/L.13). The recommendations contained in document E/ICEF/1992/AB/L.8, presented a realistic view of the needs of emergency programmes and funding for field activities. While UNICEF assistance to Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of independent States was important, that support should not mean any lessening of the priorities assigned to developing countries.

72. Mr. MONTAÑO (Observer for Mexico) said that the 1990s could be a decade of renewed hope for a better life for the world's children in an atmosphere of freedom and social justice. He noted that the economic problems of the developing countries had resulted in lowered standards of living for the population, particularly the most vulnerable groups. Structural adjustment policies and military expenditure in some developing countries had led to a decline in access to health services and education, with a direct effect on vulnerable groups. Despite those socio-economic obstacles, UNICEF had achieved great progress, particularly in the health field.

73. The Government of Mexico had recently undertaken an unprecedented programme of action to assist children, women and youth. Its main objective was to guarantee improved child survival, protection and development, involving health, education, basic sanitation and assistance to children in especially difficult circumstances. Progress towards those goals would be monitored every six months. In addition, his Government had put its commitments into action by repaying a significant portion of the principal of its external debt and channelling what it had thus saved in interest payments into social programmes to fight absolute poverty, which would benefit the most disadvantaged children.

74. The worsening situation in Africa was of great concern. Natural disasters, armed conflict and severe economic recession, compounded by external debt, had led to the current situation. His Government fully supported the priority given to Africa.

75. The progress achieved for children would be of no real benefit unless there was corresponding progress in integrated development. The political commitment of the industrialized countries to reverse global economic decline and to promote recovery in developing countries was essential in order to guarantee peace in the coming century.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

76. The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that, more than any other single statistic, the fact that 40,000 children died every day in the world as a whole testified to the scale of the international community's responsibilities and, perhaps, to the inadequacy of prevailing economic principles. The responsibility for remedying that situation lay first and foremost with UNICEF.

77. He himself had welcomed his appointment to the post of Secretary-General not least because it offered him the opportunity to make a contribution, however small, to the cause of children, and particularly children in the big cities of the third world. As the Mayor of Montreal had said at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, children were in the forefront of the endangered species. More than 200 million children were living, and sometimes dying, in the streets. However, it was not only in the countries of the South that children died a lingering or violent death: in Europe children who had been abused were dying of their wounds, and in totalitarian regimes they were tortured for refusing to spy on their parents. Perhaps the children who died an early death from sickness, hunger or violence saw the twentieth century world in a more realistic light than did the adults who discussed their plight.

78. He had long been convinced that there could be no improvement in the situation without better living conditions, training and opportunities for children all over the world. His own contribution to that endeavour would be to achieve greater coordination of action throughout the United Nations system. At the Rio Summit, the focus had been on environment and development, the two challenges which must henceforth be addressed together, in other words the focus had been on the long term, yet as had been pointed out there were only about 400 weeks remaining until the end of the twentieth century. He himself had told the Conference that its work was intended for the benefit of future generations, and to that he would now add that UNICEF's efforts on behalf of children must be in tune with the spirit of Rio, and directed towards the goal of sustainable and global development.

79. The coordinated mobilization of the international community's resources to prevent crises was one of the priorities he had assigned himself as Secretary-General, but crises affected not only international security in the traditional sense, but also security within the wider framework of economic balance and protection of the planet. Security in that global context was the essential factor in crisis-prevention, and its achievement presupposed greater coordination between the organizations of the United Nations system. He therefore welcomed the observations in that regard made by the Executive Director in his opening statement at the current session.

80. The Executive Board was to be commended for the excellent guidance it had provided to UNICEF over the years, particularly by steering the Fund through the difficult period of the cold war when ideological conflicts had hampered international cooperation on various fronts. Similarly, during times of accute economic crisis - most notably the 1980s - UNICEF had found ways to

(The Secretary-General)

help Governments stretch limited resources by relying on low-cost, high-impact interventions and mobilizing communities to improve conditions for children. The approach promoted from the mid-1980s, which was aimed at sparing children the worst effects of austerity measures, had helped to build the broad international consensus that now prevailed regarding the need for human-centred development, poverty-alleviation and the importance of "safety nets" in times of crisis and transition.

81. The Executive Board had also kept UNICEF at the forefront of the United Nations response to emergencies. The new instabilities and conflicts in the period following the cold war would require even closer cooperation and greater effectiveness on the part of the United Nations system, under the leadership of the new Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Eliasson.

82. It was a significant achievement that 117 States had already ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which for the first time recognized children's essential needs as rights: its universal ratification and application must be seen as key tasks of the era of democratization. A further significant step had been the World Summit for Children, at which the Governments of Member States had committed themselves to the compelling ethical principle that children's essential needs should have a "first call" on society's resources, and to an agenda whose implementation would significantly improve the lives of all children by the year 2000. It was to be welcomed that the Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit was now being translated into national programmes of action in over 120 countries. The United Nations system - with UNICEF as its lead agency for children - was assisting developing countries in the critical follow-up process, and would help to monitor progress towards meeting the agreed goals. He looked forward to issuing a comprehensive progress report in that regard later in the year, and was confident that it would reflect an accelerated pace of implementation in all countries and the necessary reordering of priorities. He trusted that the national programmes of action would also address the critical issue of additional financial resources, without which the promises that the world had made to its children could not be met.

83. As Secretary-General, it was his goal to employ the machinery of the United Nations system to prevent crises, not only in respect of peace and international security, but also in the economic, social and environmental spheres. He was convinced that the international community could do far more to prevent armed conflicts, hunger and disease and environmental degradation. That would require increased cooperation, vision and leadership, in addition to greater efficiency on the part of the United Nations system. He had been encouraged at the recent session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination by the willingness of all members to develop new approaches for collaboration. In his capacity as Chairman of that body, he would ensure that coordination received high priority and that the full potential of the United Nations system was harnessed to meet the critical challenges of the future.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.